

Alley Art Frame

Prototype Test Project – Aspen to Route 66 Pedestrian Alley

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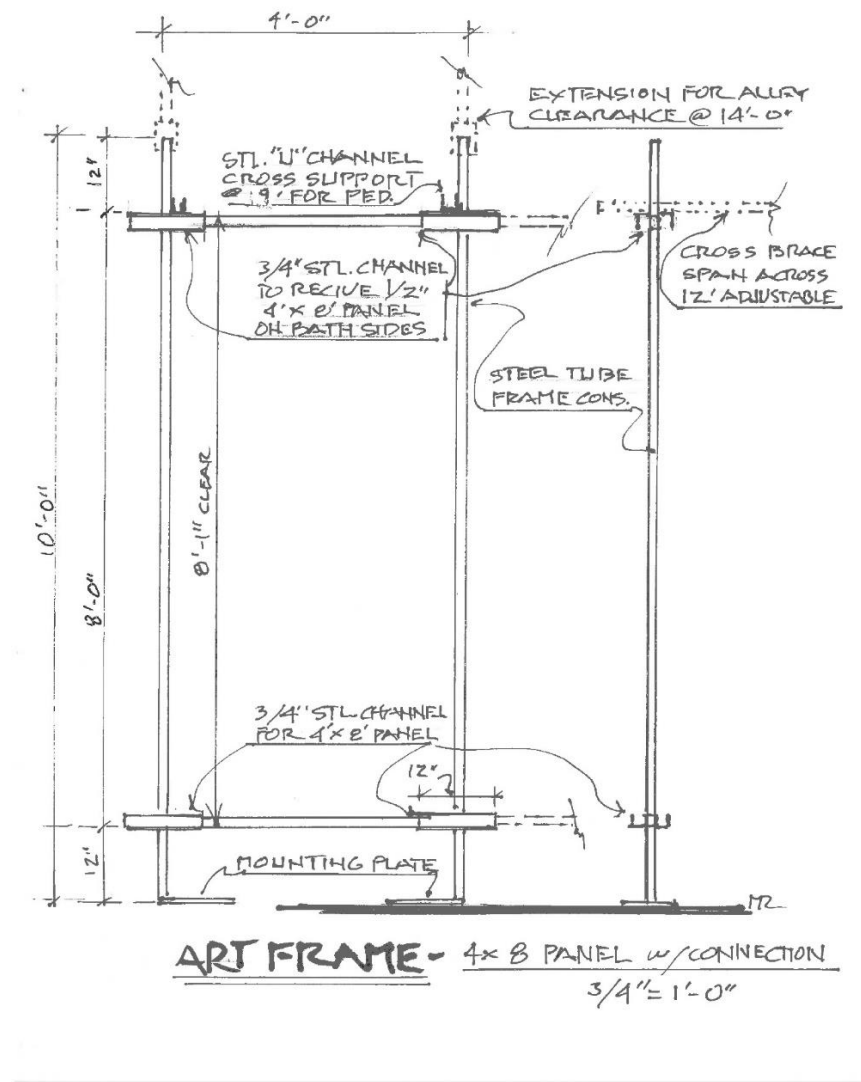
Background: The question was asked; *how should you attach art panels (mural art) to historic buildings?* The best approach to adding art to 1900s era historic brick buildings is to not attach it! Any penetration, even in the mortar joint is an invitation to water penetration and damage. The concept that came about was not attaching art to the building but developing an independent framework. The concept was motivated further because the historic buildings are not the city's, but the alleys are. A concept was developed by looking specifically on how an independent art framework would work with a potential alley selected. Selected was the north end of the alley now temporarily modified for pedestrians use that is connecting to the existing pedestrian mall – pedestrian walk from Route 66 to Aspen and Heritage Square. The artwork installation concept aligns with the building faces on the south side of Aspen Avenue at the farthest north end and is intended to further define the pedestrian route when entering from Aspen.



Alley looking North to Heritage Plaza

Basic Adaptable Frame Concept: Developed is a basic frame that is intended to span an alley when connected with a 9-foot clearance (a similar clearance is at the city hall parking lot solar panels at 9'-4"). The 9-foot clearance is intended for pedestrian designated alleys while still allowing for access for most vehicles when required. Extensions for 14-foot drive under can be added to the frame for the largest truck clearances. The sketch shows a basic frame of 4' Wide x 10' High. The basic frame is intended to be linked to others to create a unified stable structure for mounting of artwork and defining space.

Basic frame drawing

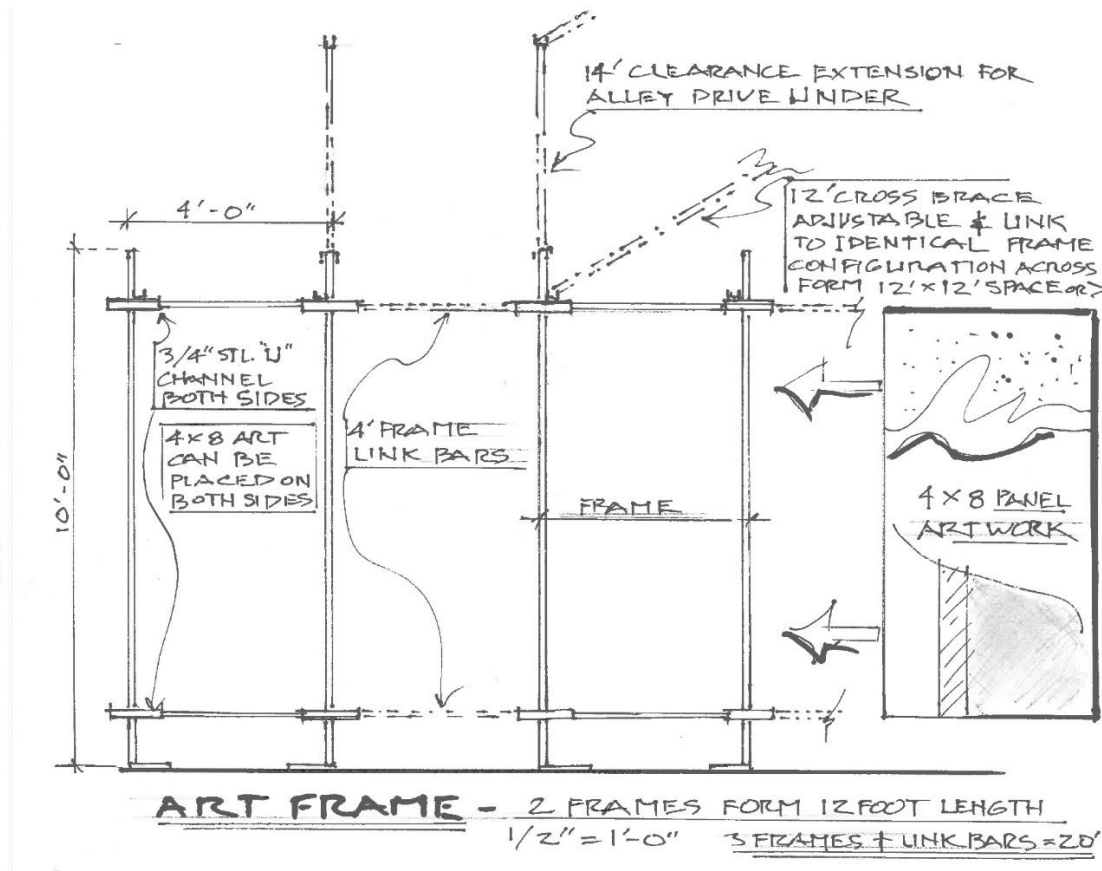


Art Panel Accommodations: On both sides of the frame are 1-foot long steel channels $\frac{3}{4}$ " "U"s --- they allow for the slide in and securing of art panels – I picked typical 4x8 size (plywood, melamine, faced sign board, etc.) for the application of art on a typical panel as most available and at the least cost. The "U" channels allow art on either side when visible or can be used to stagger planes or provide dimensional and visual effects.

Frame & Component Material: The basic frame and other connecting component are constructed with light-weight square steel tubing. All cuts are 90-degree with a simple layout that can be set up with a jig, welding joints will result in a stable frame.

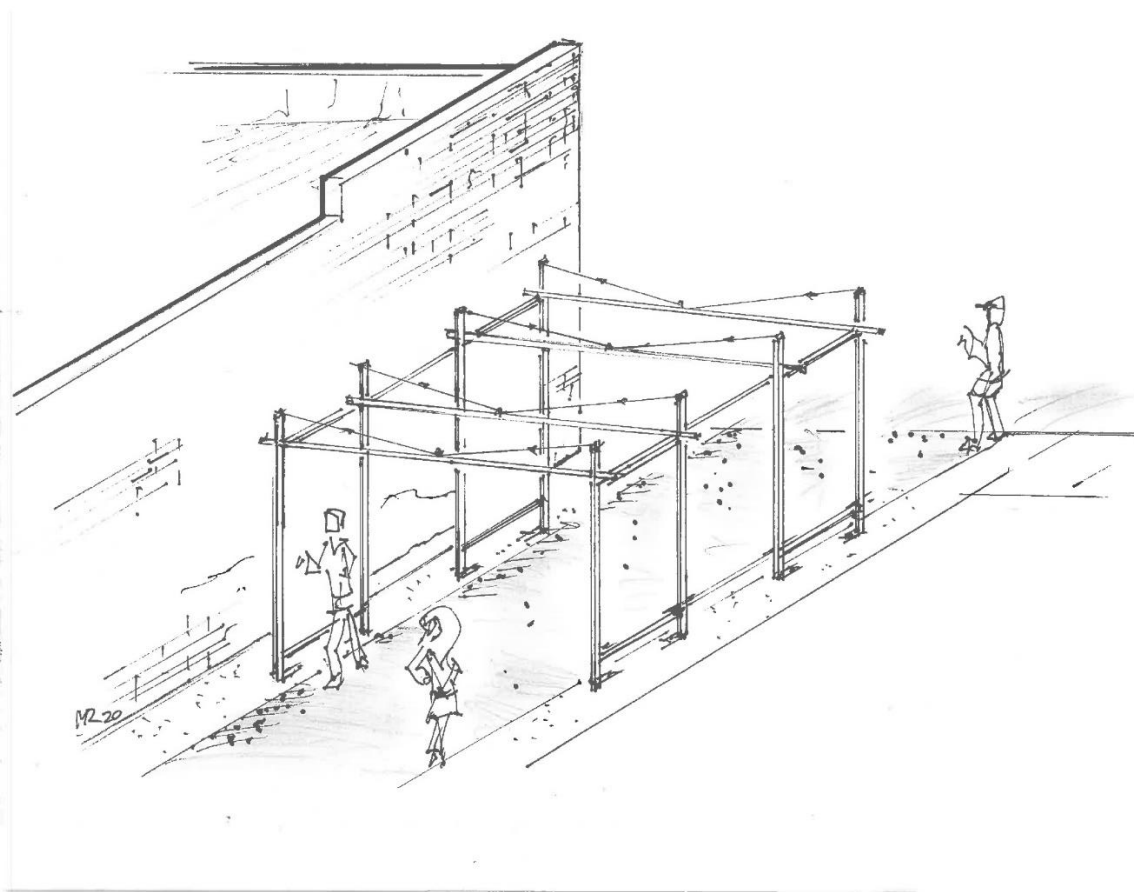
Basic Frame Expansion System: Two frames can be linked together with two 4-foot horizontal connecting bars for a 12-foot horizontal length accommodating three 4' x 8" art panels. This configuration is 2 frames and a set of connector horizontal bars with no need for a central frame. As previously noted, the frames and connectors are light steel tube construction. This configuration would accommodate a mural size of 12' long x 8' high.

Expansion drawing



Flat-Arch Connectors. So, for an installation in the proposed test alley (example photo) a set of frames on the west (12 feet horizontal length) and the same configuration on the east side of the alley are proposed. The typical width of a historic Flagstaff alley is 16 feet from building to building. The 16-foot alley width has on each side 3-foot wide cement areas for utility locate (meters, poles, bollards, etc.). The asphalt pavement width is a 10-foot clear drive with meters and bollards never encroaching into this clearance. The clearance between the east and west composite frames may be in the range of 11 feet + for example; matching the typical clearances with meter and poles at 11 feet clear typically.

Alley drawing



Structural Stability: Each frame has 2 inward facing bottom mounting plates that can be mounted into the concrete with expansion bolts. The 2 sides are connected across the alley with 12 foot + cross flat-arch members at the top (9' clearance) that are adjustable and secured. Each frame has two 1-foot extension (@ 10') where a tension wire and turnbuckle run to the center of the cross-connectors to provide lateral stability in both east-west directions (for this installation location).

Frame Versatility: The frame system can also work for placements at alley ends with only 2 frames at each side making an entry archway. This example you would have a 4x8 panel of art on each side of the entry, with one per each frame. The basic frame can also accommodate 4-foot vertical extensions placed on the ends of the 10' frame that would allow 14-foot drive under clearance for large delivery trucks.

Space Defined: If you have two 12-foot assemblies and cross connect at the top with the 12 foot connecting overhead braces you can end up with a 12 foot by 12-foot defined space for an exterior room. This could define the spaces that are proposed for Aspen Ave for closing one of the traffic lanes while providing art. The frame has U channels on both sides so art can be installed on both sides and placed with no panel breaks or the installation could be staggered for interest. Diagonal bracing at the top with tension wires may require additional cross-braces or end returns may be required for the free-standing outdoor rooms. Alley installation should not experience the wind loading of free-standing frames. The point of this concept is that these frames are not permanent and can be used in various

ways and in various configurations; simple low cost easy to manufacture - connect and disconnect and reconfigure.

Ghost Sign Preservation: The eastern building at the north end of the alley has a good example of a historic ghost sign. These signs were hand painted examples of early century advertisements. It is now generally accepted as a preservation practice that the ghost signs should remain faded and layered showing multiple signs showing through. Efforts should only be taken to stabilize and not to restore them to their original condition; though this is still debated by some. The Art-Frame installation has the potential to do both with preservation and restoration. Restored appearance could be painted on Plexiglas panels restoring the look of the sign in some areas while allowing other faded areas to be viewed behind the clear panel. Many possibilities exist in antistatic and historic interpretation.

Historic Preservation Practices: Also, please note that adding a mortar coat, such as at the west wall of the subject alley wall is contrary to known preservation practices. Nothing good comes from it except more brick damage – called rising damp. Though you see this done many times the application is causing extensive structural damage to the brick behind. The coating traps moisture and simply raises it higher and comes out and spalls brick with the freeze thaw cycle. Ultimately this coating should be removed, and weep holes reestablished and the contact with the ground minimized. Visual improvements can be made with panels that allow for vented areas between the brick and the panel. Temporary visual improvements can be made to the mortar coating by repainting with breathable latex paint for a better appearance though removal of the inappropriate repair should be accomplished.